

But I forbear : for I repeat that I have no intention of making a direct attack upon the passion for romance that has taken so deep a hold upon the community ; and I beg pardon if any should be led, from my remarks, to fear a transmigration into the limbo of Milton. I wish to look at the fact, that so general a taste for romance exists, with the eye of a philosopher ; and to inquire what that strong, deep-rooted principle of human nature is, that lies at the foundation of this taste. And although I doubt not that some are attached to romances because their baser passions there find fuel to inflame them, yet I prefer to believe, in general, that this taste has a nobler origin, and results from that strong love for whatever is new and wonderful, which is found in every human bosom,—especially in the morning of life. That desire was given us for wise purposes. Whenever it is suffered to waste itself upon fiction, it is perverted ; and what was intended for our happiness becomes our bane. God has filled this beautiful world with enough of thrilling realities to feed and gratify this passion to the utmost, through the whole course of our pilgrimage. Passing by all other sources whence it may receive gratification, I request the attention of this audience — especially the youthful part of it—to some of the wonders developed by modern science. My object is to convince my hearers, that here is a far wider and nobler field, and a profusion of more delicious fruit, and sparkling gems, than fiction can offer. My hope is, that I may thus divert the attention of some who have begun to sip of the Circean cup of romance, to the pure Castalian fountains of science, where the sparkling nectar of truth rises up to meet them.

But in exhibiting the wonders of science, where shall I begin ? The field is immense : it is the universe ; and it is all filled up with wonders ; and the more critically these